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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT  
IRAN  
PARIS - THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT  
IRAN

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION HEADLINES "GAZA: NO MORE SETTLERS"  
AND DEVOTES A NUMBER OF REPORTS TO THE EXPULSION OF THE MORE  
RECALCITRANT SETTLERS, EMPHASIZING THAT THE DISENGAGEMENT IS  
MOVING MORE QUICKLY AND WITH LITTLE VIOLENCE. IN HIS EDITORIAL  
PATRICK SABATIER BEGINS BY SAYING THAT "THE WAR OF THE  
SETTLERS WILL NOT TAKE PLACE." SABATIER ENDS HIS COMMENTARY  
WITH A NOTE ABOUT SHARON'S AND ABBAS'S WEAKENED DOMESTIC  
POSITIONS AND THEIR NEED FOR HELP FROM THE INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY. (SEE PART C) ALL OTHER FRONT PAGES ARE DEVOTED TO  
THE COLOMBIAN CHARTER THAT CRASHED IN VENEZUELA WITH OVER 150  
FRENCH TOURISTS RETURNING HOME TO MARTINIQUE. AIRLINE SAFETY  
ARTICLES ABOUND, WITH LE FIGARO'S HEADLINE IMPLYING THE  
AIRCRAFT WAS "A DUMP" POORLY MAINTAINED WITHOUT PROPERLY  
TRAINED PERSONNEL. THE WEST CARIBBEAN AIRLINE IS FAULTED FOR  
CUTTING CORNERS, LACKING FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY AND  
OVERWORKING ITS PERSONNEL. THE EDITORIAL SUGGESTS THE NEED FOR  
A BLACK LIST OF DANGEROUS AIRLINES AS WELL AS A "BLUE SEAL" OF  
APPROVAL REWARDING SAFE AIRLINES.

IN THE WAKE OF YESTERDAY'S ATTACKS IN BAGHDAD, LE FIGARO  
COMMENTS: "THIS IS THE DEADLIEST ATTACK FOR AUGUST, AN ATTACK  
WHICH THE TERRORISTS SEEM TO HAVE ORCHESTRATED WELL. THIS NEW  
CYCLE OF VIOLENCE, WHICH COULD GET WORSE, IS TAKING PLACE IN A  
LANDSCAPE OF POLITICAL TURMOIL, WITH THE VARIOUS RELIGIOUS  
GROUPS UNABLE TO AGREE ON THE NEW IRAQ. IF NO AGREEMENT CAN BE  
FOUND BY NEXT MONDAY, THE PARLIAMENT WILL HAVE TO BE DISSOLVED  
AND NEW ELECTIONS ORGANIZED."

MOSCOW'S AMBIGUOUS POSITION TOWARDS IRAN IS ANALYZED IN LE  
FIGARO (SEE PART C). LE FIGARO ALSO INTERVIEWS CONFLICT EXPERT  
GERARD CHALIAND, AUTHOR OF "IRAQ: FROM ONE WAR TO ANOTHER."  
CHALIAND DISCUSSES THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE, IRAQ,  
IRAN'S ROLE IN THE REGION AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: "THE  
U.S. WAR MACHINE IS NOT CAPABLE OF CONTAINING THE IRAQI  
INSURRECTION. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE LIKELY TROOP DRAW DOWN  
IS MORE A DOMESTIC POLITICAL MANEUVER THAN A REFLECTION OF  
CONDITIONS ON THE GROUND. BECAUSE IT WILL TAKE AT LEAST TWO  
YEARS FOR THE IRAQI FORCES TO BE ABLE TO TAKE OVER FROM THE  
U.S. MILITARY. IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST  
INITIATIVE, SOME SUCCESSES OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY CANNOT BE  
DISMISSED, SUCH AS THE TOPPLING OF SADDAM HUSSEIN, HOLDING  
ELECTIONS IN IRAQ, AND INDIRECTLY - SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM  
LEBANON. HOWEVER, IRAN REMAINS THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM IN THE  
REGION; THE REGIME IS DETERMINED TO ACQUIRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS  
AND ITS MOVEMENT TOWARD MAKING ITSELF A SORT OF NUCLEAR  
SANCTUARY APPEARS UNSTOPPABLE. THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN  
IS MEDIOCRE. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS THERE DEPEND TO A GREAT  
EXTENT ON THE POPPY INDUSTRY AND THE PROMISED RECONSTRUCTION  
IS LONG IN COMING. IN EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA, WHAT THE U.S.  
WANTS IS A WEAK RUSSIA IN ORDER TO AVOID A RUSSIAN-CHINESE  
ALLIANCE HOSTILE TO U.S. HEGEMONY. IN INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM  
WHAT MUST BE NOTED IS SCARCE NUMBER OF ATTACKS SINCE 9/11. THE  
TRUTH IS THAT MANY ATTACKS HAVE BEEN THWARTED. IT IS NOT  
INSENSITIVE TO SAY THAT OVERALL, TERRORISM REMAINS A MINOR  
PHENOMENON, EXCEPT FOR ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT. IT IS THE  
ROLE OF STATES TO FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE SECURITY AND FOR THE  
MEDIA TO REFRAIN FROM ADDING TO THE PUBLIC'S ANXIETY."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT

"WOUNDS"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (08/19): "IN THE  
END, THE WAR OF THE SETTLERS WILL NOT TAKE PLACE. THE SETTLERS  
ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BE EVACUATED WITHOUT THE USE OF  
VIOLENCE. AMONG THE PALESTINIANS REASON HAS ALSO PREVAILED.  
BUT THE EVACUATION, ALBEIT PEACEFUL, WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO  
HEAL THE WOUNDS OF GAZA. THE ISRAELI ARMY REMAINS BEHIND IN

GAZA, WHICH IT HAS TURNED INTO AN OPEN-SKY OVERCROWDED PRISON DEVOID OF HOPE. BUT THE PALESTINIANS ARE ALSO STAYING BEHIND. IT IS UP TO THEM TO PROVE THEY ARE NOT THEIR OWN WORST ENEMIES. IN ADDITION TO THE REIGNING CHAOS, THE POLITICAL POWER STRUGGLE AMONG THE FATAH MEMBERS IS LEAVING AN OPENING TO HAMAS EXTREMISTS WHO WANT TO IMPOSE THEMSELVES. IT WILL NOT BE EASY FOR MAHMOUD ABBAS TO PROVE TO THE PALESTINIANS THAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A DECENT ADMINISTRATION ARE MORE EFFICIENT WEAPONS TO ESTABLISH A STATE THAN ROCKETS AND TERRORIST ATTACKS. SHARON IS ALSO WEAKENED BY THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CRISIS HE HAS CREATED. BOTH MEN HAVE PROVEN THEY COULD WORK TOGETHER IN THE GAZA PULLOUT, BUT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR BOTH TO STAY ON THE ROAD, IF NOT TO PEACE, AT LEAST TO RELATIVE CALM. THEY NEED ALL THE HELP THEY CAN GET FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD."

IRAN

"MOSCOW COMES TO TEHRAN'S RESCUE"

ALEXANDRE CEDRE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/19): "RENEWED TENSION BETWEEN TEHRAN AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS INDIRECTLY UNDERScoreD THE AMBIVALENT STANCE ADOPTED BY MOSCOW ABOUT IRAN AND THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. TENSION BETWEEN MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON RESURFACED AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN IRAN. WHEN PUTIN CONGRATULATED THE NEW PRESIDENT AND OFFERED A NEW NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IN SPITE OF RUSSIA'S ASSURANCES THAT THE DEAL CONCERNS ONLY COMMERCIAL NUCLEAR PROGRAMS, WESTERN OBSERVERS ARE WORRIED. ESPECIALLY SINCE MOSCOW IS ALSO LOOKING AT NEW MILITARY CONTRACTS WITH IRAN. IF THESE NEW MILITARY CONTRACTS ARE CONFIRMED, THEY WILL NO DOUBT BE A SOURCE OF IRRITATION FOR WASHINGTON. THEY WILL ALSO CAST A SHADOW ON THE KREMLIN'S POLICY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, BECAUSE IRAN'S WEAPONS, WHETHER CONVENTIONAL OR UNCONVENTIONAL CAN ONE DAY FALL INTO THE HANDS OF MUSLIM FANATICS." HOFMANN